

Children's Learning Through Play: Perspectives and Practices of Public School Early Childhood Educators

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Abstract

Play serves as the source of learning and knowledge to children in an early age. Piaget's cognitive theory supports that different exploration capacities develop and progress as children mature through their play experiences. However, different perspectives arise from this theory due to the greater demand for academics than play. Thus, this phenomenological study explored the perspectives and practices of public early childhood educators on play. Five public school early childhood educators with 2-10 years of kindergarten teaching experiences were the participants. Findings showed that public school educators describe play as a means of learning, enjoyment, exploration, and motivation. The participants demonstrated full knowledge of the benefits of play to the development of the physical, mental and emotional aspects which are necessary for learning. However, it was found out that participants were challenged to practice and utilize play as a means of teaching and learning due to the limited provision of learning materials, classroom spaces and the large number of pupils including parent's expectations. This study showed that educators' role is to practice knowledge and play an active role in utilizing and advocating play as an effective strategy in teaching and learning.

Keywords: *learning through play, perspective, practices, play experiences, early childhood educators*